

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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October 27, 1998

The Honorable Kathleen Patterson  
Chairperson, Committee on Government Operations  
Council of the District of Columbia  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Room 709  
Washington, D.C. 20001

**SUBJECT:** Letter Report – Follow up Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)  
(OIG-8-99KV-9901)

Dear Councilmember Patterson:

This is in response to your letter of October 1, 1998, in which you forwarded a constituent's letter describing a general state of disarray in title documents maintained by the District of Columbia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Your constituent's letter implied that District residents are unable to transfer titles to their motor vehicles because title documents have not been microfilmed. Your constituent also indicated that vehicle title information is unattended in an unlocked, walk-through storage room.

Members of my audit staff met with DMV personnel at 301 C Street, NW on October 14, 1998 to review your constituent's concerns. Additionally, we performed a test to determine if the title information could be obtained from the system.

Our review found vehicle title information dating back to 1994 that had not been microfilmed. Title information was contained in overflowing boxes and file cabinets. The unprocessed backlog was attributed to a combination of a lack of personnel and the large volume of daily title applications received by DMV. We were advised that DMV receives approximately five hundred new title applications each day (see attachment).

DMV personnel are aware of the backlogged vehicle title information that has not been microfilmed. We were informed that the DMV is currently in the process of soliciting for a contractor to microfilm the vehicle ownership information. This solicitation should be out in the near future. We requested a copy of the contract and were informed that a copy would be available within the next few days.

### Unprocessed Vehicle Information

The unprocessed vehicle title information data that has not been microfilmed does not impact the District residents' ability to obtain duplicate title information needed to transfer their motor vehicles. At the time a vehicle is originally registered, the vehicle identification information is entered into a computer information system. Subsequent requests for duplicate registration are processed against that computer information system, not against the data that has or has not been microfilmed. The only time that information would be needed which has or has not been microfilmed would be if a discrepancy existed between the information that was in the computer and what the customer states it should be. If a discrepancy of this nature exists, the original document would need to be pulled or the microfilm record reviewed. DMV personnel informed us that, in these instances, the customer is told that it could take up to five days to locate the original document.

According to a monthly report, only nine requests that needed research were submitted to the DMV for the month of September 1998 (see attachment). The personnel stated that they had only one request for which the original title information could not be found.

In a test that we conducted at the Department's offices, we determined that title information could be obtained from the system in approximately five minutes.

Additionally, we were unable to confirm your constituent's observation that vehicle ownership information was unattended in an unlocked walk-through storage room. We observed that, although the walk-through storage area had two entrances, access to the storage area was not open to the public, and both entrances had locked doors.

We plan to follow up with the DMV in reviewing their contract for microfilming the backlog title information.

Please call me at the above number if you have any questions, or a member of your staff may call Mr. John N. Balakos, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 727-9749.

Sincerely,



E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr.  
Inspector General

Attachment

cc: Henry Lightfoot, Interim Director, DMV